



**NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER  
TRANSFORMATION**

**SACT's REMARKS to**  
**US FLAG RAISING CEREMONY**  
***'4<sup>th</sup> of July'***

**NORFOLK, 30<sup>th</sup> JUNE**



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Mayor Fraim, Ambassador, Senator, Admirals, Generals, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here this morning to join our host nation, the United States of America, in celebrating its National Day.

I would especially like to acknowledge:

- The Honourable Paul Fraim, Mayor of Norfolk
- Senator & Mayor Elect of Norfolk Kenny Alexander
- Ms Charlotte Hurd, representing Senator Warner
- VADM Richard P. Breckenridge, Deputy Commander US Fleet Forces Command
- Ms Yvonne Almond, Norfolk NATO Festival Chair

for being with us today.

We feel immensely privileged to stand alongside the US soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and civilians who serve in ACT, to raise and salute the American Flag, “*Old Glory*”...A flag that remains a universally-recognized symbol of freedom, democracy, and hope.

In the fluttering stars and stripes we recognize the enduring commitment of the American people to protect, defend and serve these values, wherever and whenever needed.

As President Roosevelt put it 75 years ago: “*When Americans repeat the great pledge to their country and to their flag, it has always been their deep*



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*conviction that they pledge as well their work, their will and, if it be necessary, their very lives."*

When we look at the US flag, we also honour the common roots which have bridged the two sides of the Atlantic for more than 400 years.

And being here in Virginia, the Old Dominion, to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July adds a very special meaning and flavour for all the Allies. This is an area with so many reminders of the 4 centuries of transatlantic relationships with Europe.

It started close to here in Jamestown, with the first permanent English settlement on the East Coast, the beginning of a westward movement born of hope and seeking a better future on this new continent.

The embrace of hard work, looking beyond self-imposed limits, and of being future oriented, fuelled a specific mindset for the great people of the United States, who declared their independence 240 years ago.

And at that time, coalition warfare brought together future European Allies and the young United States. America welcomed some of the best officers, educated in the finest European military academies to battle alongside those fighting for independence.

- General von Steuben of Germany, who joined the fight and trained the Continental Army;
- General Lafayette of France, who joined General Washington as a dashing young officer and was instrumental in the victory at Yorktown;
- Polish-Lithuanian General Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who served George Washington as his chief engineer; to name just a few.



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Since then, these simple exchanges have supported the bridge between both shores of the Atlantic.

The words and values of the Founding Fathers enshrined in the Declaration of Independence were carried back across the Atlantic. The self-evident truths, the right of every human being to enjoy “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” spread, influencing national and democratic movements across Europe.

And with them came progressively the idea of a collective and powerful Alliance able to protect the Euro-Atlantic area.

This core idea behind the Washington Treaty, for which American leadership played a vital part, became so strong it sustained a durable and resilient Atlantic Alliance.

Its cornerstone remains the bond of the transatlantic link.

It is quite clear our Heads of State and Government will reemphasize next week in Warsaw, the necessity to maintain this robust bond to address the increasing complexity of our security environment.

But behind their declaration, it will be up to each of us to imagine how this bond can remain strong.

And I would take this opportunity to say a few words about the critical role played by the citizens of the Hampton Roads area.

It is from here, during the Cold War, that SACLANT was tasked to ensure that the Alliance’s sea lines of communications could be secured to allow North



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American forces and logistics support to reach European shores, should an Ally come under attack.

When NATO is again challenged at its borders, we may have to relearn some of the skills from that period, in order to enable flexible deployment and the presence of forces wherever they are needed.

But we will also have to be innovative if we want the Alliance to adapt successfully and continue to deter those who would threaten our Nations.

As President Kennedy said, *“Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future.”*

Therefore, following 9/11, General Kernan described ACLANT not as a physical bridge between North America and Europe but as NATO’s bridge to the future.

This is why ACT was created in 2003 here in Norfolk.

And to shape the future of combined and joint operations, this Headquarters is, and must remain connected even more to the United States. Because together, we will find the inspiration and willingness to innovate and maintain our edge over any and all of our potential opponents.

What lies ahead of us will be very demanding and we will look well beyond the tasks which will emerge from the next Summit.

While fulfilling these tasks, we must accelerate our efforts to be the pathfinders of the Alliance’s future military capacity.



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We must ensure our forces can maintain the most credible deterrence and defence posture and that they can recover from any setback, keep the initiative on our side and always retain the ability to surprise our opponents.

It is a long but vital journey, whose success will depend on our collective efforts.

We owe these efforts to our Nations, so we can preserve our unity and willingness to fight together, against terrorist groups who attack our citizens and our way of life, as seen in France, Belgium, the United States and most recently in Turkey.

We owe these efforts to all the servicemen and women, who are and will be deployed in harm's way to protect all our Nations, our values and dreams.

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We are greatly helped in this mission by our Host Nation, which offers us such perfect and enjoyable living and work conditions.

My last words will therefore be for this Great Nation, its people, local authorities and Virginians throughout the Commonwealth who are so helpful and keen to make us feel at home, once again ensuring both shores of the Atlantic remain linked.

Long live the United States of America.

Thank you for everything this country has done to maintain a strong Alliance.

Happy birthday America.